MARITIME CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
1014 Florida Avenue
Richmond
Contra Costa County
California

HABS No. CA-2718

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARITIME CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

HABS No. CA-2718

Location: 1014 Florida Avenue, Richmond, Contra Costa County, California

Date of Construction: 1943

Architect: Unconfirmed; possibly Ed Cerruti of Kaiser Engineering.

Present Owner: Contra Costa County

Present Use: Child care center

Significance: The Maritime Child Development Center was one of approximately thirty-five nursery school units of varying sizes established in the Richmond area during World War II in order to provide child care for women working in the Kaiser shipyards. This center was funded and constructed by the United States Maritime Commission as part of a larger development that also included housing, an elementary school, and a fire station. The housing was demolished after the war but the other structures remain. The Maritime Child Development Center is a wood frame structure executed in a spare, modernist style. Operated by the Richmond School District, the Maritime Child Development Center incorporated progressive educational programming, and was staffed with nutritionists, psychiatrists, and certified teachers. It had a capacity of 180 children per day. At its peak, with 24,500 women on the Kaiser payroll, Richmond's citywide child care program maintained a total daily attendance of 1400 children. Unlike the federally-funded WPA day care facilities implemented during the New Deal, the World War II centers were not intended for use by the destitute, but for working mothers.

The Kaiser-sponsored Child Care Centers, particularly those at Kaiser's industrial sites in Vanport, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington, gained a reputation for innovative and high quality child care. That the Maritime and Pullman (since renamed the Ruth C. Powers) Child Development Centers in Richmond, both constructed during World War II, continue to function as child care facilities nearly six decades later, is a testament not only to their effective design, but to the continuing demand for assistance for mothers who work.

Historian: Alicia Barber, summer 2001

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Part I: Introduction

The Richmond Shipyards

Richmond, California is located on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay, or the "East Bay," sixteen miles northeast of the city of San Francisco. In its early years, the area was devoted primarily to agriculture, and then to railroad and industry, shaped by the establishment there in 1900 of the western terminus of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. Harbor dredging and improvement began in 1907, in order to facilitate use of the extensive coastline for industrial purposes. Sizable manufacturing and industrial interests established in early Richmond included the Pullman Palace Car Shops, a Standard Oil refinery, and a Ford Assembly Plant, among others.

The onset of World War II completely transformed the small town as Henry J. Kaiser chose Richmond as the site of a massive shipyard operation. Kaiser was one of the most prominent and energetic American industrialists of the twentieth century. Born in upstate New York in 1882, he migrated westward at a young age and established his first company, Kaiser Paving, in British Columbia in 1914. He then worked on a number of road and irrigation projects throughout the American west.[1] In the 1930s, he earned federal contracts to work on several major dams, including Hoover, Grand Coulee, Bonneville, and Shasta.[2]

With the onset of World War II, Kaiser was determined to be a part of military production. In late 1940, Kaiser, in partnership with the Todd Shipbuilding Company of Seattle, won a contract to build thirty ships for the British government at the new Richmond shipyards. Construction of Yard One began in January 1941 and Yard Two of April that same year. One month before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Kaiser formed the Permanente Metals Corporation. He bought out Todd to become the sole owner of both the shipyards at Richmond and the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland. He then won a contract with the United States Maritime Commission (USMC) to build Liberty cargo ships for the American military. Yard Three was built beginning in January 1942. Kaiser added Yard Four in Richmond in 1943, the same year he established the Swan Island and Kaiser-Vancouver shipyards in the Oregon/Washington State border area. He also established a steel mill in Fontana, California, to supply steel for his ships. By 1944, the Kaiser Company was the largest shipbuilder in the country.[3]

In order to staff his shipyards with the thousands of workers needed, Kaiser recruited new employees from the South and Midwest, and migrants swarmed to the coastal shipyards. The San Francisco Bay Area, along with Detroit and Seattle, offered the highest defense area wages in the

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[1] Rickey Hendricks, *A Model for National Health Care: The History of Kaiser Permanente* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 11.
[2] Hendricks, 1.
[3] Hendricks, 44; Nancy Goldenberg and Jody R. Stock. "Richmond Shipyard Number Three," Contra Costa County, California, (National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1999), 15, U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D. C.; Charles Wollenberg, ed., *Photographing the Second Gold Rush: Dorothea Lange and the East Bay at War, 1941-1945* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1995), 18.

nation, with billions of dollars in defense contracts allotted to the region's industries.[4] Richmond almost instantly transformed from a small industrial town to an overcrowded small city, as the population rose from 23,642 in 1940 to 130,000 by April 1943.[5] Services were strained. The shortage of available housing in the area meant that thousands of workers and their families were forced to live in cars, barns, and even makeshift tents. Some workers without any form of housing worked the night shift so they could sleep in area parks during the day.

Increasing the impact on the community, many of these workers brought their families with them, resulting in a massive increase in the numbers of children in the area. According to one report, migrant families included an average number of three children per family unit.[6] Before World War II, there were approximately 7,000 children in Richmond; by September 1944 there were around 35,000.[7] An incredible surge of enrollment in the public school system led to enormous classes, split shifts, and chronic overcrowding. The school population of Richmond nearly quadrupled between the 1940-41 and 1944-45 school years, growing from 7,327 to 28,851. Many of the city's residents expressed concerns about juvenile delinquency, with so many unattended children on the street at odd hours of the day.[8]

A number of facilities were established in Richmond to keep children occupied and supervised. These included a YMCA Hospitality House, an Industrial USO, and a boys' club.[9] After-school day care was made available in schools and in housing units for children between five-and-a-half and sixteen years old. The Richmond Recreation Department also sponsored a variety of activities for teenagers, including dances each Thursday and Friday night. Playgrounds were open six days a week, with a director in charge of each play area. The Richmond Recreation Department and Housing Authority also sponsored activities in the housing groups, from drama groups to sewing.[10]

Kaiser was intensely aware that he needed to arrange for the provision of additional services for workers' families immediately, or risk losing his work force. A longtime Kaiser employee, Michael Miller, explained, "From the outset we [the Kaiser Company] recognized the relationship of proper housing and adequate community facilities because we have had much experience on engineering jobs in remote places. The way people live and the way their families are cared for are bound to be reflected in production."[11]

Caring for families took on a whole new meaning for the defense industry with the influx of female workers during World War II. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1944 approximately 1,250,000 women with children under fourteen years old had husbands serving in

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[4] Marilynn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 44.
[5] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 33.
[6] "Education Report," [ca. 1943], Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 159, Folder 25, 2.
[7] "Growing Pains," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 1 September 1944, 8.
[8] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 51, 124.
[9] "Growing Pains," 8.
[10] "Summer and the Kids," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 7 July 1944, 8.
[11] Donald Albrecht, ed. *WWII and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 120.

the armed forces.[12] With their husbands away, a large number of these women would need to somehow juggle homemaking and employment as they struggled to contribute to their household income and to the larger war effort. The provision of child care during the workday therefore became a new challenge for industries and defense communities to pursue together.

Kaiser and Women Workers

Although most defense industrialists were quick to assert women's patriotic duty to work outside the home during wartime, Henry J. Kaiser was an enthusiastic advocate of a woman's right to work at any time. He regularly voiced his philosophy that women's employment was not just a duty, as so many others believed, but a choice that they should be free to make in war or in peacetime. In 1942, he stated his opinion that in the future, women would feel free to work as they wished, not only in offices but in "machine shops, shipyards, airplane factories, everywhere that their special skills and talents can find expression." He stated that "Every individual should be free to choose the thing he does in life—at least in peace time. And women as well as men must have this freedom." He was especially attuned to the needs of working mothers, believing that women workers should be given time off to have children, with assistance from public health measures, inventions of science, and better societal organization.[13]

For the moment, however, it was most important to give women the support they needed to allow them to join the wartime work force and keep production going. Women had, of course, worked outside the home before, but never on such a large scale, and rarely in the realm of heavy industry. Industrialists like Kaiser suddenly needed to do everything they could to attract women to their less familiar work sites. In 1943, Kaiser testified before Congress, arguing that essential services for women in war industry, including child care facilities, shopping centers, and recreation, were essential to improve the manpower situation. He stated that industrial sites should include child care centers as well as health clinics, cleaning services, recreation centers, and other facilities to assist women in their performance of work and domestic duties, even including take-home food services. It was his belief that the government should finance such services, since many individual factories did not have the available funds to do so.[14]

Women began working at the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond in the summer of 1942. By June 1944, they would make up more than 27 percent of Kaiser's shipyard labor force. These were not, for the most part, middle-class housewives, but local working class and mid-to-low income migrant women.[15] Soon after women began working at the Richmond shipyards, Kaiser's company established a number of programs catering to their special needs. The U.S. Women's Bureau had recommended the hiring of female counselors to help women negotiate their new dual employment and domestic roles, and to refer them to important services and facilities. Many defense industries adopted this practice, including Kaiser's shipyards.[16] The first women's

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[12] Susan Elizabeth Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children: Child Care, American Women and the Federal Government in the World War II Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 252.
[13] "The Woman of Tomorrow," [ca. 1942], Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Scrapbook v. 158, August 1942-December 1942.
[14] Lucy Greenbaum, "As Kaiser Sees It," *The New York Times*, 31 October 1943.
[15] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 46, 47.
[16] Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver during World War II and Reconversion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 71.

coordinator at the Richmond shipyards, Sarah Rehling, was hired by the Kaiser Shipyards in October 1942 "to give guidance and assistance to women field workers," who by that time numbered 1870. Her staff included a personnel counselor for each yard. Some of their priorities included the selection of appropriate clothing for the women holding various shipyard jobs, as well as an induction program to instruct new employees on various matters including their attitude towards work, health issues, and problems at home. Eventually, matron's buildings were constructed at some of the shipyards, containing clean cots on which women could rest when suffering "periodic pains or headaches." Women workers would eventually, although not immediately, be entitled to full prenatal and maternity benefits through Kaiser's Health Plan. [17]

Perhaps the most critical service needed by female employees, however, was the provision of child care while they were working at the shipyards. Kaiser would hire record numbers of women in his shipyards, and the need for child care would rise accordingly. According to a 1942 analysis of 3,675 families in Richmond, 712 children under the age of five were in need of child care, either because both parents were working in the shipyards or because they would do so if child care were available.[18] In a report released January 1, 1943, the Kaiser Company revealed that a total of 1989 mothers working in the Richmond Shipyards together had a total of 3,471 children. More than 1,300 of these children were aged five years or younger.[19] The need for child care was becoming acute.

Although Kaiser seemed to consider child care to be a woman's right, most public figures cited necessity rather than entitlement when establishing their child care services. The official Richmond shipyards newsletter, *Fore 'N' Aft*, was pragmatic about the necessity of nurseries, with an unnamed writer commenting that "Mothers must work in war plants because there aren't enough men to go around." The writer lamented the fact that as a result of this necessity, neglected children were found in every war plant area "on streets, on sidewalks, in strangers' yards, in empty lots, with no mothers around to look after them."[20] It was widely believed that child neglect could lead to juvenile delinquency, and lack of adequate child care caused high turnover and absenteeism among women workers.[21]

Kaiser was not the only industrialist to express concern about child care. Others began to look upon child care as a method of attracting women workers, and thereby decreasing absenteeism among these workers once hired. Some companies, such as the Hudson plants in Detroit, complained that the lack of child care facilities in their communities was making it more difficult to recruit women workers. The Boeing Company, in Seattle, reported that lack of day care was the most-cited reason that female applicants refused assignments to Boeing.[22] The

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[17] "Counselors Now in Shipyards," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 15 October 1942, 3; "Every Day is Ladies' Day at Richmond," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 2 June 1944, 9.

[18] "Proposal," [ca. 1942], Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 287, Folder 24.

[19] "A Graphic Portrayal of the First Six Months Experience of Women Employed in the Kaiser Shipyards, July to December, 1942," Progress and Programs Department, Richmond Shipyard Number Three of Kaiser Company, Inc., Richmond, California, 1 January 1943. Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 289, Folder 20.

[20] "Mothers by the Day," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 3 September 1943, 2.

[21] Riley, 253.

[22] Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 127.

Curtiss-Wright Company in Buffalo solved its problem by establishing its own child care program during the war years. Others, like Commercial Iron Works in the Portland area, screened women before hiring them to determine if they had arranged adequate child care, and if they had not, refused to hire them.[23] In 1943, Alan Johnstone, general counsel of the Federal Works Agency, consulted with Kaiser and other industrial leaders regarding services to support women workers. Some of the suggestions to emerge from the meeting were underwritten child care centers, as well as medical facilities near war plants.[24]

Overall, it is clear that Kaiser was both personally and professionally supportive of the establishment of child care and other facilities and services for his female workers, and did what he could to facilitate federal funding for them in Richmond. As his shipyard newsletter asserted, "failure to provide adequate care for the children of working mothers...is probably the gravest home problem we face. For it would be folly to win the war—and find that we had lost our children."[25] At the same time, members of the local community were working diligently toward the same goal of accessing federal funds for local child care and other services. The system that emerged from these efforts would be an unprecedented collaboration between local, federal, and industrial entities.

Part II: Federal Sponsorship of Child Care

Works Progress Administration (WPA) Nursery Schools

Although various forms of organized child care had existed before World War II, the U.S. government did not recognize care of pre-school children as a federal responsibility until the 1930s. This federal funding began in the aftermath of the Great Depression, with the implementation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's wide range of New Deal relief programs to employ those who had lost their jobs or were otherwise impacted by the nationwide economic downturn. Among the many "alphabet" agencies formed was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Through FERA, nursery schools were established across the country to educate underprivileged children and their parents and to provide needed employment for laid-off teachers, janitors, cooks, and other workers.[26] Their establishment was also viewed as an important public health measure, with its stated goal "to remove the smallest and most helpless of the State's citizens for at least part of the day from the worst effects of living in rotten dwellings."[27] In 1935, administration of the federal nursery school program was transferred to another agency, the Works Progress Administration, known also as the Works Projects Administration (WPA). The WPA became part of the Federal Works Agency in the summer of 1939. By January 1941, at least 36,000 children were being served in approximately 1,500 WPA child care centers across the country.[28]

Parents were not charged for enrolling their children in these centers. This in itself represented a major cultural shift, as nursery schools had long seemed the exclusive domain of

[23] Kesselman, 68-69.
[24] Raymond Clapper, "Aid for Mothers," *The Washington Daily News*, 29 September 1943.
[25] "Eight Hour Orphans," *Fore 'N'Aft*, 7 May 1943, 6.
[26] Riley, 343.
[27] Douglas Haskell, "The Modern Nursery School," *Architectural Record* 83 (1938): 85.
[28] Riley, 343-44.

America's wealthier citizens. Yet with the move of many Americans from rural to urban areas and subsequent distancing from traditional networks of support, more women were beginning to work outside the home and were in need of some form of child care. By 1938, one architectural journal reported that "no community or housing project safely be planned without a nursery. This is true no matter whether the project is public or private, and regardless of its social stratification."[29] Although the WPA nursery schools were perceived purely as components of the relief program and not specifically an assistance for women working outside the home, they were not the only nursery schools in operation at the time. A small number of commercial child care centers were also operating nationwide, but they were, on the whole, not very popular, as they were often unclean, overcrowded, and poorly supervised.[30] At least two commercial nursery schools were operating in Richmond in 1941, along with the single nursery school unit sponsored by the WPA.

The WPA in Richmond

The Richmond Board of Education approved the establishment of Richmond's only WPA-funded nursery school at the site of the Peres school grounds in North Richmond in March 1936. A temporary building was moved from the Pullman grounds to the Peres grounds at this time and improved under the supervision of Walter Helms, Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools.[31] North Richmond, where the Peres School was located, started as a squatter's camp, with temporary shacks thrown together from scrap lumber from the shipyards. The area was almost exclusively African-American. Into the late 1930s, the children served by the Peres School were increasingly members of minority groups, including Mexican, American Indian, Portuguese, and African-American families who lived in outlying areas.[32] Reportedly the only program established to directly aid Richmond's poor population, the WPA nursery program served between fifty and sixty children, providing them with fully subsidized hot lunches along with daily care. Erla Boucher was hired as the director of this WPA nursery school.

In spring of 1940, the board of education was informed that the WPA would now only fund 50 percent of the cost of food for the program, and suggested that the Board find other sources for the remaining half. The Board could not itself use existing school funds, since children attending the nursery were not of school age, and therefore not eligible for district monies. Walter Helms, who did not believe it was the school district's responsibility to be feeding children anyway, advised the school district to drop the program entirely. One factor contributing to his attitude may have been a general suspicion that socialist and communist groups, to which Helms and the Board were openly hostile, were attempting to take over public welfare programs in the community.[33] World events, and the needs of local industry, would soon force Helms to reexamine and reverse his position toward nursery schools in Richmond.

The Lanham Act

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[29] Haskell, 85.
[30] Anderson, 127.
[31] "Minutes, Office of the Board of Education, Richmond, California, 1 July 1932 to 30 July 1942," [ca. 1942], West Contra County Unified School District Archives, Richmond, California, 81.
[32] Hubert Owen Brown, "The Impact of War Worker Migration on the Public School System of Richmond, California, from 1940 to 1945" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1973), 94-95.
[33] "Minutes, Office of the Board of Education, Richmond, California," 243; Brown, 69-70.

With the entrance of American forces into the war in 1941, it became clear that women would need to join the work force in large numbers as male workers left for the front. Many of these women would therefore have to decrease, or at least modify, their traditional roles as caregivers. Emma O. Lundberg of the United States Children's Bureau, established by Congress in 1912, wrote that "it is essential that full consideration be given to the children whose mothers may seek to enter gainful employment, and that community programs be developed to assure children whose mothers enter industry a full measure of protection and care." To this end, she recommended not only child care, but "developmental training of preschool children," a particular necessity in defense areas where families were prone to live under "abnormal conditions."[34]

The prospect of losing mothers to the work force understandably prompted a great deal of anxiety throughout American society. In response, a number of federal agencies and programs turned their attention to the projected impact the war would have on children, as their mothers went to work for the defense industry. The U.S. Children's Bureau sponsored a conference on women's employment, children and the needs of the defense industry in July 1941. A wide spectrum of concerned parties attended, from governmental representatives of the WPA, the U.S. Office of Education, and the Women's Bureau, to trade unions, state and local welfare departments, and professional nursery school organizations. One result of the conference was the formation of a Joint Planning Board to study and seek solutions to the impending impact of wartime conditions on children.[35]

This board, which consisted of representatives from the Office of Education, the WPA, the Federal Security Agency, and the Children's Bureau, among others, recommended that the WPA nursery schools be used as the basis for a new national program to care for children of defense workers. This suggestion met with resistance from WPA officials who feared that such a move would threaten their intention to assist children of underprivileged families. Although the WPA would later reverse this position, its initial reluctance sent the Joint Planning Board in search of other solutions to the impending crisis. They found room for child care provisions in the National Defense Housing Act of 1940, more commonly known as the Lanham Act.[36]

Rep. Fritz Lanham (D-TX) had originally proposed a bill in the fall of 1940 to enable construction of housing for workers and their families who had migrated to defense areas nationwide in order to join a wartime industry. As a defense housing program, this legislation fell under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency. An amendment to this act, passed in 1941, added funds for the establishment of necessary social services, including hospitals, schools, and recreational facilities, in these same defense communities. Although child care was not specifically mentioned among these provisions, child care advocates saw an opportunity in the act's language. Specifically it earmarked public works funds for "any facility necessary for carrying on community life substantially expanded by the national-defense program," or "necessary to the health, safety or welfare of persons engaged in national-defense activities."

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[34] Emma O. Lundberg, "A Community Program of Day Care for Children of Mothers Employed in Defense Areas," *The Child* 6 (January 1942): 152.
[35] Riley, 345-46.
[36] Riley, 346.

Inclusion of child care under this banner would hinge upon its definition as a necessary and normal service to communities. Also, communities would subsequently have to prove need.[37]

Eventually, the President's Bureau of the Budget announced that Lanham Act funds could be used to finance up to 50 percent of the costs of local child care facilities as "public works" operating specifically for the children of wartime defense workers. Once a community requested such funding, the Children's Bureau or the Office of Education would certify the need, and funds would be distributed by the FWA.[38] Need was established by proving that "the problem of child care was caused or increased by war programs, that large numbers of women were being employed, that their labor was essential to war production, and that local financing could not meet the community's needs."[39] Through the Lanham Act, $52 million in federal funding, matched by $26 million from individual states, funded a total of 3,102 child care centers during the war. Although only 130,000 children were served at any one time, the Lanham Act-funded centers were believed to have served a total of approximately 600,000 children in forty-seven states over the course of the program, with the peak occurring in 1944. At the height of the program, federal funding supported 13 percent of the children who needed care.[40]

Federal Funding: Confusion and Controversy

Although the money ostensibly existed for local communities to claim, federal bureaucracy could be difficult to negotiate, involving near-labyrinths of jurisdiction and procedure. Some of the governmental agencies involved in the child care discussion included the Children's Bureau, the Office of Education, the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, the Works Progress Administration, the Farm Security Administration, and the U.S. Maritime Commission. By the spring of 1942, no child care grants had yet been approved, and officials from the U.S. Children's Bureau and Office of Education suspected that the FWA did not plan to follow through on their earlier agreement.[41] In August, the Chairman of the War Manpower Commission issued a "Directive to Develop, Integrate, and Coordinate Federal Programs for the Day Care of Children of Working Mothers," in an attempt to improve oversight of these programs. The complicated organizational system did much to delay the establishment of child care centers across the nation.[42]

Finally, under increased pressure, the funds were released. Rather than one coordinated federal program, it fell to local school districts and local committees to assume the responsibility of administrating child care centers, for which they contributed roughly half the funds.[43] As the money became available to local communities, the initiative and energy assumed by these communities would largely determine the quality and availability of child care. Across the country, these local day care-committees were responsible for assuring that their communities would be served by federal funds. One historian suggests that it was the local day-care

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[37] Riley, 347-48.
[38] Riley, 348.
[39] Anderson, 124.
[40] "A Timeline History of Child Care and Early Education," Child Care Action Campaign website, www.childcareaction.org; Riley, 268.
[41] Riley, 349.
[42] "Directive No. IX," *The Child* 7 (October 1942): 50-51.
[43] Riley, 337, 340.

committee in Portland that was responsible for the high caliber of care in Kaiser's child care centers there, although the Kaiser Company had been responsible for their rapid construction, ample funding, and enormous scale.[44] In Baltimore, local resistance delayed efforts to establish local day care. In contrast, Detroit and Seattle featured active and energetic local day-care groups who sought support from other community agencies in the face of federal inertia.[45]

By October 1942, federal funds had been earmarked for the establishment of nursery schools in Richmond, but the city was unable to claim the funds for the lack of a formal organization to administer it. Hope Cahill, the Northern California nursery school administrator, advised Richmond superintendent Walter Helms that the money would be available as soon as a local organization was formed. Helms responded that he could not afford the establishment of another administrative division to oversee nursery schools. He also reported that the district was not able to find suitable buildings for these facilities, equipment to establish the schools, or properly trained teachers to staff them.[46] This response echoed a general sentiment in many defense communities that wartime child care should be handled on a federal, not local, level, since the war was a national concern.[47]

Much of the resistance by the Richmond school district to administering the nursery schools can be explained by the community's general dismay at the influx of newcomers. Many local residents thought of these new migrants as poor, rural, and uneducated, and did not embrace them as equal members of the community.[48] Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, disagreements over the establishment of child care facilities reflected larger philosophical differences over acceptable gender roles in America. Because of its challenge to deeply-held beliefs about the relationship of mothers to children, one historian has written that "no service generated more controversy than the wartime child care effort."[49] Each side was passionate in its denunciations of the other. Child care advocates asserted that it was women's patriotic duty to help the defense industries, and that child care for the children of these working women was therefore an essential component of the war effort. One 1943 U.S. Office of Education leaflet, for instance, claimed that "good care for the children of working mothers means more planes and armaments for our fighting men, and victory sooner."[50]

Those who objected to federally-sponsored child care applied the same patriotic rhetoric to women's obligations to the home. Representatives of the United States Children's Bureau stated in 1941 that "mothers who remain at home to provide care for children are performing an essential patriotic service in the defense program." They advocated the establishment of nursery schools and day care centers only in the worst cases.[51] Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins

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[44] Kesselman, 72-73.
[45] Anderson, 128-29.
[46] "Fund Allotted for Nursery School Here," *Richmond Independent*, 19 October 1942, 1.
[47] Riley, 245.
[48] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 44
[49] Anderson, 122.
[50] Qtd. in Riley, 342.
[51] Unpublished Summary of Conference on Day Care for Children of Working Mothers, 14 November 1941, Box 114, Children's Bureau Records (RG 102), National Archives, qtd. in Elizabeth Rose, "'Essential Patriotic Service': Mothers and Day Care in World War II Philadelphia," Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians, April 1997, www.indiana.edu/%7Eoah/97program/rose.htm, 3; Hazel A. Frederickson, "The Program for Day Care of Children of Employed Mothers," *The Social Service Review* 27 (June 1943): 166.

voiced a common opinion one year after Pearl Harbor when she stated:

> It is important to remember that mothers of young children can make no finer contribution to the strength of the Nation and its vitality and effectiveness in the future than to assure their children the security of home, individual care, and affection. Except as a last resort, the Nation should not recruit for industrial production the services of women with such home responsibilities.[52]

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, in a statement entitled, "Mothers...Our Only Hope," voiced a similar opinion, that a mother "already has her war job. Her patriotism consists in not letting quite understandable desires to escape for a few months from a household routine or to get a little money of her own tempt her to quit it. *There must be no absenteeism among mothers.*"[53]

Local and national parent-teacher groups were also often hostile to the idea of day care. The National Parent-Teacher Association opposed employment of young mothers, calling it harmful to child welfare, and many local parent-teacher groups followed suit.[54] Many of those who objected to the federal funding of child care eventually capitulated with the knowledge that this was to be a temporary situation and the only way to prevent widespread child neglect. In large part, the temporary nature of these services would be reflected in the buildings themselves. As one Children's Bureau official put it, "Facilities required for the emergency should not be so permanent in structure that they cannot be changed or discontinued when the temporary need is over."[55]

Even when national agencies came to support the notion of child care, they often continued to disagree about its implementation. The War Manpower Association stated in 1942 and again the following year that "the first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their own homes to their children." They did concede that if it proved absolutely necessary for women to be employed outside the home, everything possible should be done to minimize disruption of home life. If care could not be found for children, said the Association, then facilities should be established for that purpose, but only as community projects and not as an employer responsibility.[56] Many social welfare leaders also objected to industry-sponsored child care.[57] On a national level, Hazel Frederickson of the U.S. Children's Bureau argued that "Involvement of the employer in the care of employees' children violates the sound principle of an impersonal objective approach to industrial problems for both employer and employee."[58] Some thought that Kaiser's willingness to provide child care for mothers reflected his ranking of industry needs over those of children, while others simply feared

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[52] "Policies Regarding the Employment of Mothers of Young Children in Occupations Essential to the National Defense," 26 January 1942, Records of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor (Record Group 89), Box 21, "Children's Bureau" file, qtd. in Rose, 3.
[53] Qtd. in Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basis Books, 1988), 74.
[54] Anderson, 124.
[55] Lundberg, 153.
[56] Rose, 4; "Policy of the War Manpower Commission on Employment in Industry of Women with Young Children," *The Child* 7 (October 1942): 49.
[57] Hendricks, 61.
[58] Frederickson, 163.

that locating child care centers at defense industry sites would unduly expose children to the threat of enemy attack.[59]

Union women stood firmly in support of child care centers. Also, one of the most influential voices in the debate was that of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whose advocacy of child care did much to sway public opinion. On one occasion she wrote, "I have long known that the only way we could possibly get the women that we need to take jobs was to provide them with community services....If the shipbuilding companies will recognize this fact, that it is a part of being able to do their jobs to render these services, it may spread to other industries and will help enormously in war production."[60] In affirmation of this position, the Office of War Information began a campaign to encourage women to work for the war effort. Kaiser's child care centers were emphasized in some of these traveling promotional exhibits as a national model for other companies to imitate, and to encourage support of these facilities.[61] Kaiser became a sort of model of corporate welfare, improving the outside lives of workers through better housing, recreation, and education, and health care.[62]

The tide finally began to turn definitively toward federal support of child care in late 1942. In August of that year, the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services (later renamed the Office of Community War Services, Federal Security Agency) was allotted $400,000 from the President's Emergency Fund in order to promote and coordinate child care programs for working mothers. Funding was also being directed toward child care from a variety of other sources. Some WPA nurseries were still in operation in 1943, but were being rapidly dismantled. Funds from some were being transferred to facilities operated under the Lanham Act.[63] Other WPA nurseries had opened their enrollment to children of defense workers for a small fee, beginning in 1942.[64]

The Road to Establishing Child Care in Richmond

Early in 1942, State Employment Service representative Arthur Hall began to emphasize the need for a child care system in Richmond larger than the single, struggling WPA nursery. Although he still objected to the school district's funding of such nurseries, Walter Helms agreed to help Hall find other agencies to fund them. In March 1942, Hall met with representatives from the Richmond City Council, the WPA, and the city government to discuss plans for a new nursery program. They discussed such topics as parental fees, hot meals, supervised play, and health care. By May, the group was still unable to find a suitable building, having rejected the old Lincoln School and the Italian-American Club House, among other sites, and the search was dropped. In July, the WPA opened a temporary nursery in one of the local schools, serving forty children whose parents were employed by defense industries, but this facility closed in the

[59] Kesselman, 76.
[60] Qtd in Kesselman, 75.
[61] Howard Dratch, "The Politics of Child Care in the 1940s," *Science and Society* 38 (Summer 1974):197. Qtd. in Rose, 6.
[62] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, p. 76-77.
[63] Frederickson, 166, 169.
[64] Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 59.

summer.[65]

In November 1942, a Committee on Children in Wartime was organized in California "to establish basic policies concerning standards for care and supervision of children and to help coordinate the services of health, welfare, and educational agencies throughout the state." Emergency legislation in early 1943 authorized California school districts to "establish and maintain child care centers for children between two and sixteen years of age of gainfully employed mothers," specifically those working at war plants that needed woman-power to function. This act also authorized the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement standards for the Child Care Centers as well as to ensure through the distribution of permits that employees of the centers would be properly qualified.[66]

In mid-November, the responses to questionnaires distributed by the Contra Costa Development Association revealed that 888 local women with a total of 1797 children aged one through twelve, said that "they were seeking or would seek child care in order to work in the local war production industries." Nearly half of those children were under the age of six. With these responses as additional justification for the need, Walter Helms finally announced that the school district would agree to operate a number of nursery schools in Richmond. A committee was quickly formed, with representatives from the Federal Employment Agency, the State Department of Education, the shipyards, the city's Health Department, chamber of Commerce, City Council, and other federal, state, and local agencies including the PTA, Richmond Housing Authority, and Junior Chamber of Commerce.[67]

By January 1943, this committee took the first step toward requesting Lanham Act funds. Under recommendation, they decided to request funds for ten nursery units in Richmond. Six would be located at Nystrom, meaning the area formerly associated with the Nystrom family property in central Richmond, with four others at Peres, Harbor Gate, the Canal Addition and Esmerelda Court, a ninety-four-unit project near the Canal War apartments. The meeting at which this was determined was attended by city leaders as well as by Sarah Rehling, women's counselor and assistant director of labor relations for the Richmond shipyards, James Hill, of the Federal Housing Authority, and Arthur Hall of the Federal Employment Service. A number of regulations were adopted, and the committee authorized Helms to produce a tentative budget and submit the request for funds. The regulations specified that the centers would be operated by the board of education, with a director of nursery schools responsible to the board. Children under the age of two were not to be cared for, while women with very small children or with three or more children were to be discouraged from pursuing employment outside the home. The board of education would only provide this program during the war emergency.[68] Erla Boucher, former director of the WPA nursery, was hired to head the program.

The California legislature passed the Hawkins-McMillan bill on June 2, 1943. This bill, enacted for the duration of the war only, appropriated $500,000 to the State War Council as

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[65] Brown, 266-67.
[66] California State Department of Education, Division of Public School Administration, "Report of Child Care Centers Administered and Operated by California School Districts" (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1949), 1.
[67] Brown, 268.
[68] "City Moves to Ask U.S. Aid for 10 Day Nurseries Here," *Richmond Independent*, 6 January 1943, 1.

"supplemental support" to finance child care centers in California. The bill specified that local districts must exhaust every other possible means of funding - federal, parental, and industrial - before the War Council would appropriate State funds for the centers.[69] Communities needed to cease discussion and to begin to act on the opportunities given them to build centers. A June 1943 article in *The Social Service Review* claimed that "the problem of care for the children of working mothers is past the stage of argument. It is on the doorstep of every war-industry community, and, as with many war problems, the difficulty is far ahead of the solution. Facilities and public funds to provide facilities are totally inadequate." The article cited current estimates that the number of women in the workforce could increase to as high as eighteen million by December 1943.[70] With such numbers imminent, establishment of the necessary facilities to make child care a reality for Richmond's female workers now became critical.

Part III: Child Care for Richmond's Shipyard Workers

Construction of Facilities

Although a number of Richmond's new child care centers were established in existing schools, the majority were located in the new public housing developments, financed by the federal government, that changed Richmond in 1942-43. The dispersion of these centers throughout the community would allow women to take their children to child care centers close to home, lending to their status as community services. The rapid construction of housing, child care, and other units in Richmond was the product of an unprecedented cooperative relationship among federal, local, and industrial interests.

The federal government first introduced public housing and loan programs as part of the New Deal in the mid-1930s. With the onset of World War II and increased demand for federally-funded housing, the National Housing Agency (NHA) was formed in 1942, and focused its efforts on temporary war housing.[71] The U.S. Maritime Commission and the Federal Works Agency primarily provided funding for such projects in the East Bay. The local housing authorities made decisions about occupancy and management, under the supervision of the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA).[72] The Richmond Housing Authority was incorporated in Richmond on January 24, 1941, reportedly in an attempt to exert some degree of control over imminent federally sponsored construction. Richmond had been a small, tightly knit community, and was understandably anxious over its rapid transformation. The local agency was happy to support war housing as long as it was temporary and would not interfere with postwar private construction.[73]

In January 1942, the War Manpower Commission, the National Housing Agency, the Richmond Shipyards, and the U.S. Maritime Commission conducted a housing and trailer survey in order to gain a clearer impression of the extent of Richmond's housing shortage. In March, Clay Bedford, General Manager of the Richmond Shipyards, wrote a strong letter to the Federal Housing Administration encouraging him to expedite the construction of housing in Richmond, as shipyard workers were prone to quit their jobs for lack of adequate housing and transportation. He asked for the FHA to "get us the money," and asserted that "we can build these dormitories

[69] "Child Care Center Bill Becomes Law," *Richmond Independent*, 2 June 1943, 9.
[70] Frederickson, 160, 163.

and facilities within sixty days from the date that we get the money and the property and the go-ahead, if we are permitted to use our own design drawings."[74]

Finally, in mid-1942, the Federal Housing Authority and the United States Maritime Commission, in conjunction with Kaiser, began building the first of a projected 25,000 units of new housing.[75] Atchison Village, which still exists today, was the first of the housing projects to be constructed. Next was Triangle Court, followed by sixteen other projects. Terrace, Canal, and Harbor Gate were built in south Richmond, near the shipyards. Reportedly, the Richmond housing authority concentrated African Americans in separate areas, specifically in the housing projects to the west of First Street and south of Cutting Boulevard. Atchison Village, Nystrom Village, and Triangle Court, in north Richmond, all inland projects, were the most prized, permanent housing projects, and admitted only whites. The two developments specifically referred to as USMC Divisions No. 1 and No. 2 as well as the Harbor Gate project were reportedly 90 percent white, although technically open to everyone. Restrictions based on level of employment at the shipyards created de facto segregation in these divisions.[76]

Overall, temporary war housing containing approximately 15,000 living units was built in Richmond between 1942 and 1945. The city's housing program was the largest in the nation controlled by a single housing authority. The Maritime Commission alone constructed 9,991 family housing units and 3,968 dormitories. The Federal Public Housing Administration and the Farm Security Administration constructed an additional 6,754 family units and 2,984 dormitories for shipyard workers.[77] Housing alone, however, was not enough. A consultant for the War Manpower Commission wrote to the Maritime Commission's Rear Admiral Land in March 1943, encouraging him to provide for "necessary community facilities including schools, clinics, retail shops and markets, and municipal service facilities" along with housing developments. He looked at these necessities from a labor standpoint, asserting that "the failure to provide adequate community facilities in other localities where heavy migration has taken place is one of the chief causes of turnover."[78] Child care centers, an accepted wartime necessity, would become a central component of these community facilities.

Opening of Child Care Centers in Richmond

With federal agencies providing the buildings, and the Richmond school district supplying the administration, the first government-sponsored child care centers began to open in Richmond in the spring of 1943. The first was the Terrace Nursery School, located at the Terrace war apartments, toward the western edge of the Richmond shipyards. The Terrace housing

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[71] Marilynn Johnson, "Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Richmond and Oakland, California, 1941-1945," *The Pacific Historical Review* 60 (1991), 290.
[72] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 97.
[73] "Nation's Largest Federal Housing," *Richmond Independent*, 15 September 1949; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 97, 98.
[74] C.P. Bedford to Carl W. Smith, 25 March 1942, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 15, Folder 14.
[75] Wollenburg, 18.
[76] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 105, 107, 108.
[77] "Nation's Largest Federal Housing"; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 99.
[78] Joseph P. Tufts to Rear Admiral E.S. Land, 25 March 1943. Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 159, Folder 25.

community center opened this nursery on April 15, 1943, for what one article termed "Richmond Shipyard's many 'eight hour orphans.'" With a capacity for forty-five children between the ages of two and four years, nine months, it operated seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., for a daily cost of fifty cents per child, plus an additional ten cents for an optional breakfast. Polly Corfield supervised the children with assistance from a matron, a cook, and three teachers.[79]

A nursery school at the nearby Canal war apartments opened soon after the Terrace facility. It also enrolled approximately fifty children. The Maritime Child Development Center, built as part of USMC Division No. 1, was the next to open, on June 1, 1943. The Peres Nursery School was enlarged from its original size, and continued to provide child care during the war. A September 1943 overview of Bay area nurseries listed four in Richmond - Maritime, Terrace, Canal, and Peres nursery schools.[80] By the time the Maritime Center opened, each of the previous three had an enrollment of approximately fifty children each.[81]

The Washington School, an existing school on Richmond and Montana in the Point Richmond area west of downtown, opened another center in late 1943, offering twenty-four-hour care for a capacity of 200 children. Around-the-clock child care had been in great demand by swing shift and graveyard workers. As Nursery School Director Erla Boucher announced at its opening, "The work in the yards must continue, and [this] nursery releases a man or woman or both to carry on." Fourteen children took advantage of the overnight care the first week. Children of swing shift workers arrived as early as 3 p.m., ate dinner, and were put to bed between 6 and 7 p.m. Graveyard shift parents brought their children to the center after dinner, and picked them up at noon the following day. They were charged a fee of fifty cents for less than twelve hours of care, and one dollar for more than twelve hours.[82]

The Pullman Child Development Center, located adjacent to the railroad tracks on Maine Avenue, was built sometime after September 1943, in USMC Division No. 2.[83] This center's layout is nearly identical to that of the Maritime Center, with some variations. By the time the Seventeenth Street Trailer Camp opened a nursery school unit near Yard Two in May 1944, it was described in one report as Richmond's twentieth nursery school unit. The trailer camp nursery was open to children aged two to sixteen, with the same charge, $3.00 per week, as other schools and the same dietitian-planned meals, cod liver oil and juice. A trained nurse remained on the premises for a portion of each day, with a former teacher from the Maritime Center in charge.[84]

In 1944, a Bay area planning company called Telesis surveyed the problems of female workers, and identified women's special needs at Richmond's shipyards. The planners

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[79] "A Booklet of Illustrated Facts about the Shipyards at Richmond, California," 30 June 1944, Richmond, California, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 287, Folder 13, 37; "For Mothers Only," *Fore N'Aft*, 23 April 1943, 5; "Eight Hour Orphans," *Fore'N'Aft*, 7 May 1943, 6-7; "What's Doin', Babe?" *Fore'N'Aft*, 19 May 1944, 4.

[80] "Mothers by the Day," *Fore'N'Aft*, 3 September 1943, 3.

[81] "60 Enrolled as First Nursery Unit is Opened," *Richmond Independent*, 2 June 1943.

[82] "Time to Retire," *Fore'N'Aft*, 10 December 1943, 4.

[83] Residential Land Use Map, "Richmond Planning Commission Report on Housing and Development," City of Richmond, January 1950, Richmond Collection, Richmond Public Library.

[84] "What's Doin', Babe?" 4.

determined that between her responsibilities at work and home, a female worker was working seventeen hours per day. They concluded that in order to be efficient war workers, women were in need of proper housing, health care, child care and help at home. The study presented the need exclusively in terms of maximizing efficiency. Telesis recommended that child care centers be built every few blocks, in vacant lots or converted buildings, and that services such as laundries and catering facilities be located next to them. They concluded that Richmond's housing projects did not have enough child care centers, and the health plan needed to accept entire families, not just the workers. Overall, Richmond had some of the solutions in place, just not enough.[85]

Accounts of how many child care centers ultimately operated in Richmond during the war vary widely. A Kaiser informational booklet from June 1944 refers to one large USMC Nursery School, apparently the Maritime Child Development Center, in addition to "thirty-five nursery units plus ten extended day-care centers, all located in various housing projects and school buildings." Total enrollment was said to be 1,400 children.[86] But in September 1944, a report in the Kaiser shipyard newsletter counted only ten nursery schools in Richmond, with a total enrollment of 1,000 children.[87] The discrepancy in numbers may be due to the fact that some centers were much more substantial than others. Perhaps some accounts included only purpose-built centers, while others included converted buildings and units housed in existing schools.[88] The most substantial facilities purpose-built, and most impressive structures, were undoubtedly the Maritime Child Development Center and its near-twin, the Pullman Child Development Center.

Part IV: The Maritime Child Development Center

Construction and Design

The Maritime Child Development Center was the largest of Richmond's child care centers, and by far the most heavily photographed and documented. It and the Pullman Center appear to have been the only purpose-built, stand-alone, federally sponsored child care facilities constructed in Richmond during the war. As part of USMC Division No. 1, the construction of the Maritime Center was a direct result of Kaiser Company initiative. Frustrated with the bureaucracy involved in securing Lanham Act funds for the construction of needed facilities in Richmond and at the Oregon shipyards, Kaiser company officials took matters into their own hands. They requested funds from the United States Maritime Commission to plan and construct this division for Richmond's shipyard workers.

Private contractors were prepared to step in, and by August 1942 had located the materials necessary to construct 4000 homes in and around Richmond "at their own expense." C.W. Flesher requested that the U.S. Maritime Commission office in Washington, D.C. authorize

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[85] "Women Must Work," *Fore 'N'Aft*, 4 August 1944, 12-13.
[86] "A Booklet of Illustrated Facts about the Shipyards at Richmond, California," 37.
[87] "Growing Pains," 8; Just a few months earlier, the *Richmond Independent* had reported that there were only 12 nursery schools operated by the Richmond school department. "Nursery School Observes Birth Date Tomorrow," *Richmond Independent*, 31 May 1944, 9.
[88] One early report stated that the only nursery schools in the district to be opened with federal funding were Canal, Terrace, Peres, Maritime, and one to be opened in El Cerrito, most likely at the Fairmount School. "60 Enrolled As First Nursery Unit is Opened."

the release of the materials on August 29, 1942. Two days later, Flesher asked the Maritime Commission to transfer just over $13 million that had previously been allotted to the Kaiser Company for construction at Swan Island to Richmond Shipyard No. 3 for the construction of 6,000 war apartment units. The FPHA now had the funding to construct the 6,000 housing units in Richmond.[89]

On September 10, 1942, the United States Maritime Commission authorized Kaiser to begin construction of this division, located near the existing Nystrom Village housing project, at a cost of $13 million. Families were to be well accommodated there, in two-story buildings with eight to twelve living apartments in each.[90] The units were intended to be "spacious and homey, with plenty of room around the buildings for youngsters to play." Morris N. Wortman served as chief architect for the Kaiser Company and manager of the project, with Robert Parkinson representing the Maritime Commission as resident plant engineer.[91]

From the beginning, the division was planned to include an elementary school and a nursery. The new thirty-room Nystrom School was built alongside the old Nystrom School to service the children housed in the 6000-unit USMC project.[92] Apparently the school department had been unable to build the school on its own for lack of expected funds from federal emergency works agencies. Kaiser stepped in and built the school house with his own money, arranging for the Richmond grammar school department to provide the teaching staff and equipment, with the Kaiser interests providing "everything else." The property for the school was to be rented for the sum of $1, paid annually.[93] The first families moved into their apartments, which faced Cutting Boulevard, in November 1942.[94]

It is very likely that the Maritime Child Development Center was funded in the same manner as was the new Nystrom School, with which it shares a city block. Plans for the nursery were being formulated in the fall of 1942, after the division's housing was opened to tenants. Proposed plans for the nursery, drawn by Ed Cerruti of Kaiser Engineering, depict a floor plan that is close, if not identical, to the structure as built (Figure 1).[95] An accompanying report from the Kaiser Company estimates the cost of the nursery to be $80,000. The report also includes estimates for sewage, a school, and administration buildings and fire house, and a hospital. This segment of USMC housing was referred to as the "Rousseau Section," after the name of one of

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[89] C.W. Flesher to D.E. Lawrence, 29 August 1942, Reading File, August-September 1942, RG 178 U.S. Maritime Commission, Declassified Records of the Director, West Coast Regional Construction Division, 1942-45, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, CA; C.W. Flesher to D.E. Lawrence, 31 August 1942, Reading File, August-September 1942, RG 178 U.S. Maritime Commission, Declassified NND 822013, Records of the Director, West Coast Regional Construction Division, 1942-45, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, CA, Box 20.

[90] C.W. Flesher to Vice Admiral J.W. Greenslade, 2 January 1942, Reading File, January-February 1943, RG 178 U.S. Maritime Commission, Declassified NND 822013, Records of the Director, West Coast Regional Construction Division, 1942-45, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, CA, Box 3.

[91] "Convenient Homes for Shipyard Workmen," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 1 October 1942, 9.

[92] Education Report, 2.

[93] Lawrence E. Hunt, "Kaiser Enters a New Field: He Will Build School for Richmond," *Oakland Post Enquirer*, 8 October 1942.

[94] "Moving Day," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 27 November 1942, 2-3; Hunt, "Kaiser Enters a New Field."

[95] Don Hardison, a local architect active during World War II, was able to confirm that Ed Cerruti was a staff architect for Kaiser in a conversation with the author in August 2001.

the builders.[96] Heyman Brothers of San Francisco was the contractor for the Maritime Child Development Center.[97]

The second U.S. Maritime Commission housing project, USMC Division No. 2, was constructed just to the east in early 1944. It included the Pullman Child Development Center, which was, and remains, nearly identical to the Maritime Center.[98] It is very likely that Lanham Act funds were eventually used to finance the continuing operation of the centers, after the initial USMC investment in their construction.[99] An early plan for this center appeared in the initial proposal for a 4000-unit addition to the first USMC division. In this report, a nursery floor plan dated December 9, 1942, features three classrooms and room for a ninety-bed "dormitory" in the rear wing. This plan also features the location of the kitchen, as well as coatrooms and bathrooms in the individual classrooms, as built. The final design for both centers seems to have been a combination of these two plans, with a few additional modifications. An elevation drawing in this report shows a structure very similar in appearance to both the Maritime and Pullman Centers as built (Figure 2).[100]

Most of the structures in these housing divisions were considered temporary, as reflected in the materials used in their construction. Most of the wood-frame two-story row houses had plasterboard siding, and tar and gravel roofs, as well as minimal insulation.[101] A 1950 City Planning Division Report on the War Housing reported that "buildings constructed in 1943 were built to last only five years. While buildings are not structurally unsafe, they contain many sub-standard deficiencies, such as plasterboard exterior surfaces, faulty flues, fire hazards, improperly vented plumbing fixtures, haphazard electrical wiring, inferior roofing, etc."[102]

The Maritime Child Development Center may have experienced similar problems. Certainly the construction materials used and the lack of a foundation for the building suggest

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[96] This plan for a proposed nursery in the location of the Maritime Center was dated October 13, 1942. It depicts the general layout of the center, with six classrooms grouped in an L-shape around a common "play yard." It also indicates the existence of a second floor, for sleeping compartments. The plan is contained in a binder titled "United States Maritime Commission 6,000 Unit Housing Project, Richmond, California," Kaiser Company, Inc. December 3, 1942, Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 287, Folder 23.

[97] This name appears on a sign in front of the building while under construction, Photograph No. 1-2344-3, 2 March 1943, RG 178, United States Maritime Commission Records, United States Maritime Commission Western Regional Office, Richmond Housing Project, Photographs and Negatives, 1942-43, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, California, Box 1.

[98] "A Report on Housing and Redevelopment," Richmond City Planning Commission, January 1950, Plate 1, "Planning" Vertical File, Richmond Collection, Richmond Public Library; "Directory of Active Public Housing," Federal Public Housing Authority, Statistics Division, 31 December 1944, courtesy Charles Dorn.

[99] Mary Hall Prout, Interview by John Plutte, 14 May 2001, Oral History Program, Rosie the Riveter, World War II Homefront National Historical Park, National Park Service.

[100] "Proposal: Proposed USMC Housing Project Nursery, 9 December 1942," Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 287, Folder 24.

The Powers Center quite similar in design to the Maritime Center, with slight variations in the stairwell and second story configuration, which contains offices that are still being used. It is unknown when these offices were built, but Ruth Powers states in her interview that Erla Boucher and art instructor Monica Haley both had office space upstairs. The Powers Center also has retained the outside slide extending from the second floor to the ground on the western side of the building. There is also a small addition built onto the east side of the Powers Center. A men's room and storage space is located in this addition.

[101] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 109.

[102] "A Report on Housing and Redevelopment," 37.

temporary intentions. Construction photographs illustrate both the light wood structural frame for the building and its rapid construction. A photograph dated February 10, 1943 shows just the wood frame of the first story in place. By March 18, 1943 the exterior was nearly complete. Currently painted yellow, the exterior siding of the center appears to be a combination of horizontal wood clapboards and sheets of plasterboard. The plasterboard is located on the entrance portico and along the upper sections of the walls. The structure lacks a masonry foundation; instead parts of the wood frame appear to be set directly into the ground. Horizontal wood boards fill the space between the bottom sill of the structure and ground. Vents to allow air circulation under the building are located approximately every five feet along the front and side facades.[103]

The Maritime Child Development Center is an L-shaped Modernist structure on the corner of Tenth Street and Florida Avenue, with the front entrance facing north on Florida, and another wing extending from the northeast corner southward (the east wing). The Maritime Center has modern architectural features such as a flat roof and horizontal ribbon windows. The simple forms of modern architecture were especially suited to quick erection with limited materials. The form of the structure is asymmetrical with a set-back second story only on the north wing and an angular entrance portico jutting from the northeast end of the north wing. Originally this portico contained four tall doors all surrounded by square window openings, creating a window wall. This portico still shields the main entrance, now extended by a Plexiglas vestibule.

The strong horizontal lines of the street elevations change on the playground elevations. Here the horizontal forms of the flat roof canopy sheltering the classroom entrances contrasts with the vertical form of an enclosed fire escape tower. Although now sealed and resheathed with stucco instead of horizontal clapboards, the tower on the north wing originally had three round porthole windows, suggesting a nautical theme. Two child-size drinking fountains are at its base. A single door leads into this projection, which encloses a tubular slide that curves from the second story level down to the first, pointing back into the building at its base. Both entrances to this slide, upstairs and downstairs, have been sealed off, if indeed they were ever open. Originally each classroom had a large window wall of ceiling-height folding doors that opened to allow unobstructed movement between the classroom, its covered patio and the playground. On either side of the hinged central doors was a set of three sliding glass doors that slid one behind the next. These large folding partions were replaced with standard windows and a set of double metal doors at an unknown date. Currently, on either side of the double doors is a solid wall containing a window unit featuring six lights, three up and two across.[104]

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[103] For construction photographs of the Maritime Center see RG 178, United States Maritime Commission Records, United States Maritime Commissioo Western Regional Office, Richmond Housiog Project, Photographs and Negatives, 1942-43, Box 1 at the National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, San Bruno, California. Photocopies of these images are available in the field records for this project housed in the Prints and Photographs Reading Room of the Library of Coogress, Washington, D.C..

The Pullman/Powers Center has a low concrete foundation under the exterior walls and less exterior plasterboard siding than the Maritime Center. Use of these more sturdy materials may partially account for the better overall condition of the Ruth C. Powers Ceoter.

[104] At the Pullman/Powers Center, the double doors are regular-sized, with the extra space above several of them sealed off, although some feature three small windows across the top. On either side of the doors are fixed floor-to-ceiling windows, three wide and three high.

The interior of the Maritime Center also retains its original layout and many historic features. The main entrance, on the far left, or western, end of the front elevation, leads directly into a lobby, with a built-in reception desk facing the entrance. A long wooden bench is built into the east wall. Corridors lead from the lobby to the east and north wings of the building. The north wing contains the infirmary room, with a rear door leading to a storage area and hallway. The infirmary also contains a small bathroom with child-size facilities. The remainder of the north wing is devoted to four classrooms of approximately equal size.

The second corridor extends back, to the left of the reception desk. Two doors on the right side of this corridor lead to the administrative office and another staff room with attached bathroom. On the eastern side of the corridor another door leads into the kitchen, which contains many original fixtures including a center preparation counter with an attached rack containing hooks for pots and pans. One door from the kitchen leads into a walk-in pantry, and another to a back room containing a washer and dryer, with a back door leading outside. Just past the kitchen, the eastern corridor makes a sharp ninety-degree turn to the left and then to the right again, leading to the two remaining classrooms. Originally, a short fence divided the outside recreational space of these two classrooms from the rest of the play yard, which contained swing sets, sandboxes, and other recreational equipment. Historic photographs indicate that these two rear classrooms were reserved for the youngest children, with smaller-proportioned equipment and easels for painting.[105]

Each classroom contains a coatroom and bathroom, to the left and right of the entry door, respectively. Each bathroom is fully enclosed with a row of four adult-level, glass-paned windows on the inside wall facing the classroom. There are no partitions between the individual toilets and sinks. Each coatroom is open to the rest of the classroom, with child-size open lockers built into the walls and forming a low partition on the classroom side. The lockers in the coatroom are each approximately three feet high and include a shelf near the top for children's belongings. Originally they also featured shelves near the bottom of the lockers, for which the grooves are still present.[106] On the classroom side of the low coat room partition are shelving units, with one closed cabinet in the corner.[107]

The second floor is accessed by a staircase located just to the right of the reception desk. The staircase turns ninety degrees to the right at landing in the middle before emerging onto the second floor, which spans the length of the north wing only. Child-size banisters appear

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[105] Ruth Powers stated that there were two rooms reserved for the two-year-olds, whose cots were always set up. This would appear to confirm the reservation of the two back classrooms, with their separate outdoor play area, for the youngest children. Images of children at the Maritime Center are in the Bancroft Pictorial Collection. See photograph 1983.19.106 for a view of the youngest children in their classroom. Photocopies of these images are available in the field records for this project at the Prints and Photographs Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..

[106] Ruth Powers reported in one interview that this was for children to sit upon while tying their shoes. Ruth Powers, Interview by Jon Plutte, 4 April 2001, Oral History Program, Rosie the Riveter, World War II Homefront National Historical Park, National Park Service.

[107] Describing this type of arrangement as ideal, one nursery school manual stated, "The elimination of high partitions and the arrangement of lockers simplify supervision, as teachers can readily observe entrances from the outside as well as from the main corridors into each room." Rose H. Alschuler, *Children's Centers: A Guide for Those Who Care For and About Young Children* (New York: William Morrow, 1942), 111.

underneath the adult banisters on the stairway walls and down the center of the staircase. A skylight illuminates the stairwell. Adjacent to the staircase on the second floor is a small bathroom with child-sized toilets and sinks, next to a small closed storage room. The remainder of the floor consists of a long open space with a narrow corridor between rows of wooden cross-shaped partitions that are built into the floor. These were originally constructed to divide the room into smaller napping areas for children. Near the far end of the room, taller wooden partitions section off a larger open area. Groups of casement ribbon windows along the top of the walls are well above the nap area partitions. A row of wood structural columns lines the center corridor of the second floor room. In the center of the south wall a doorway, apparently the old entrance to the tower's curved slide, has been boarded up and nailed shut.

Another fire exit door was originally located on the western end of the upstairs room. This led to a second metal slide that descended to ground level, opening into the recreation yard. The slide was at some point removed and the door completely sealed shut and painted over. A former teacher at the Maritime Center reports that both fire slides were determined unsafe by the Richmond Fire Department during the process of construction, and were in fact never used for their intended purpose. Existing photos of the outdoor slide in use by children may therefore have been produced simply for publicity purposes. The second floor of the Maritime Center is currently used for storage and evidence suggests it has always been used for this purpose in spite of being designed as a nap area.[108]

The design of the Maritime Center appears to correspond closely to that of other nursery schools constructed both before and during the war. The floor plan, interior design, and equipment are reflected in illustrations and photographs of child care centers across the country, as published in architectural journals, training manuals, and educational studies. The Maritime Center in particular benefited from the expertise of the author of one well-known volume. Early reports in the fall of 1942 announced the appointment of Dr. Catherine Landreth as the "chief consultant" for the Maritime Center. As this was the time when plans were being drawn for the center, it seems very likely that she played a role in the center's design.[109]

In 1943 Landreth was a professor of Home Economics and the head of the nursery school at the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley, located just a few miles from Richmond. She received her doctorate in Psychology from Berkeley in 1936. In her capacity as a child education expert, she wrote several books and articles about child development, including *Education of the Young Child: A Nursery School Manual*, which was published in 1942. The book contains information on the history of nursery schools, facilities, staffing, physical care of children, suggested programming, and the latest research findings regarding early cognitive ability.[110]

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[108] Ruth C. Powers, Conversation with Author, 16 August 2001. In her 2001 interview, Powers stated that the second stories of these centers were used to store all the surplus government supplies.

[109] "12 Families in Building on South Sixteenth," *Richmond Independent*, 10 November 1942, 1.

[110] Landreth, who died in Berkeley in 1995, would go on to design UC-Berkeley's Child Study Center with architect Joseph Esherick, in 1964. Her research on children's ability to make color-based racial distinctions was said to have helped lead to the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision banning segregation in schools. Catherine Landreth, Obituary, 22 February 1995, *Berkeleyan Online*, Office of Public Affairs, University of California, Berkeley, http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/1995/0222/gazette.html.

In a section on "Housing and Equipping the Nursery School," Landreth outlined fifteen requirements for buildings and equipment. All centered on creating the best possible experience for the children. Some of her suggestions correspond with features implemented at the Maritime Center including the outdoor recreational area with unobstructed southern exposure, and sliding exterior doors for the classrooms creating a "semi-shelter." Landreth's book also recommends open patios for multiple uses, such the fenced-off area for younger children at the Maritime Center, a well-lit locker room, and isolation space for ill children. Another requirement, adequate facilities for children's naps, was accompanied in Landreth's book by a photo of a Cornell University child care center nap room featuring individual screens between cots, closely resembling the partitions built into the second story of the Maritime Center. A featured floor plan from a Resettlement Administration nursery school constructed in Arthurdale, West Virginia, during 1938, included many of the same facilities as the Maritime Center, including a long corridor with six classrooms, a bathroom for each classroom, protected outdoor recreational areas, a kitchen, and isolation room.[111]

The arrangement with Catherine Landreth echoed a similar arrangement between the Kaiser Company and early education experts at the Kaiser shipyards in the Portland area. In November 1943, five months after the opening of the Maritime Center in Richmond, the Kaiser Company opened two large child care centers to serve the women workers at its Northwest shipyards. Each of these two centers was built on Maritime Commission property at a cost of $350,000 and employed 150 staff members to operate. Heading child care services as Consulting Director was Dr. Lois Meek Stoltz, the former director of the Child Development Institute at Columbia University Teachers College. Most recently Stoltz had been conducting research at the Institute of Child Welfare at Berkeley, Landreth's home institution. Stoltz' assistant, James Hymes, served as the on-site manager. Reports indicate that initially, knowing nothing about early childhood education, Kaiser intended to hire child care staff from the same applicant pool as shipyard welders. But once he was convinced of the need for professionals, he sought out the leading minds in progressive nursery education such as Landreth and Stoltz.[112]

Although the Northwest child centers differed in many respects from those in Richmond, their contemporaneous construction suggests many similarities in overall conception. One fundamental similarity was their origin in Kaiser Company frustration over the bureaucracy of federal funding. In Portland Edgar Kaiser, Henry J. Kaiser's son and head of the northwest shipyards, did not get the local day-care committee approval needed to access Lanham Act funds. As in Richmond, he went directly to the Maritime Commission to fund the centers. His argument, evidently a successful one, was that the centers were necessary for expediting production. In this effort, Kaiser and his sons appealed directly to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who encouraged the Maritime Commission chairman, Admiral Emory Scott Land, to give the Kaisers "the go-ahead signal." In this way, the government actually ended up funding more of these centers than the Lanham-Act centers, as Kaiser picked up about three-quarters of the operating costs and then added them to the cost of ship production through existing war

[111] Landreth, 22-37. Landreth cites numerous articles about the planning of nursery schools, including federal publications such as *Housing and Equipment, Bulletin of Information for Emergency Nursery Schools*, 1934, No. 2, National Advisory Committee on Emergency Nursery Schools in Cooperation with the United States Office of Education. She also includes an appendix listing the names of firms furnishing nursery school equipment and supplies.
[112] Greenbaum; Kesselman, 77.

contracts.[113]

According to Stoltz, the Portland architects hired for the project, Wolf and Phillips, had never before designed a nursery school. Instead, they reportedly derived many of the design elements for the buildings from expert studies including an important book called *Children's Centers: A Guide for Those Who Care For and About Young Children*, a guide for wartime child care centers issued by the National Commission for Young Children in 1942. It contained sections on community organization, indoor and outdoor play, suggested daily schedules, administrative advice, information on staffing, special services, and volunteer training, and designs for nursery school equipment.[114] The book also contained a suggested floor plan for a single-story, multiple-unit children's center. Books such as this and Landreth's, as well as numerous federal publications, guided architects lacking experience designing this building type with models and reference material. It is likely that Ed Cerruti, the Kaiser company architect whose name appears on proposed plans for the Maritime child care center, utilized similar information for that design.[115]

Due to their size, innovative design, and association with the country's most famous industrialist, the child care centers at the entrances to the Oregonship and Swan Island shipyards attracted national attention, with prominent articles appearing in professional journals and trade publications.[116] Each of the northwest centers was built with fifteen playrooms extending from a center play area and wading pool like the spokes of a wheel. Extending from each playroom was a covered area containing more play equipment to protect children from the temperamental Portland-area weather.[117] Each center was designed to accommodate 400 children per shift, or 1,200 per day. Child-size chairs and tables, toilets, sinks, closets, and toys were furnished. The daily program included time for naps, regular meals, play periods, sleep, and doses of cod liver oil and fruit juice. Cost was seventy-five cents per day for one child, $1.25 for two children, and $1.75 for three children. The aim of the centers was said to improve worker efficiency by giving mothers a safe place to leave their children, and therefore free their minds of worry and anxiety. Other features included an infirmary for sick children, take-home hot meals (called "Home Service Food"), a mending service, and health care, and they were open twenty-four hours per day.[118] Kaiser Company expediters ensured timely delivery of supplies for the school in spite of wartime restrictions.[119]

Although also constructed by the Maritime Commission with input from national experts, the Maritime Center differed from the northwest centers in being operated by the Richmond

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[113] Riley, 284; Albrecht, 124; Kesselman, 75.
[114] "The Kaiser Child Care Centers," interview with Lois Meek Stolz, in James L, Hymes, Jr., Sadie Ginsberg, Lois Meek Stolz, and Cornelia Goldsmith, *Living History Interviews Book 2: Care of the Children of Working Mothers.* (Carmel, CA: Hacienda Press, ca. 1978), 32, 42-43; See also Alschuler, 113-131. Many of the designs in Alschuler's book closely resemble equipment found in the Maritime Center, including wooden easels, doll beds, and lockers.
[115] Cerruti's name also appears on a plan for proposed 1942 additions to the Richmond Field Hospital, another Kaiser project. See HABS No. CA-2720.
[116] One amusing headline read, "Kaiser Changes Diapers While Mothers Build Ships," *Hartford (S.D.) Herald*, 2 July 1943.
[117] Albrecht, 124-25.
[118] Lawrence Barber, "150 Teachers, Nurses Needed: Child Care Centers to Require Help," *Portland Oregonian*, 24 September 1943; Albrecht, 126-27.
[119] Hymes et al., 42-43

school district, while the northwest centers were completely run by the Kaiser Company. The Maritime Center was also, of course, much smaller than the super centers, comprising just one component of a larger network of community-based centers in Richmond. Child care was centered at the shipyard sites in Portland and Swan Island because the residences of the shipyard workers were scattered so widely throughout the region. In Richmond, workers resided closer together, many in federally sponsored housing within the city, which allowed child care centers to be efficiently located throughout Richmond. What all these centers shared, however, was innovative programming reflecting the progressive educational philosophies of their expert consultants.

Operation of the Maritime Child Development Center

The Maritime Child Development Center opened on June 1, 1943. Recognized as one of the nation's largest pre-school child care centers at the time, the building was described by one observer as "ultra-modern," a reference perhaps to its spare, functional appearance as well as to its programming. Sixty students were enrolled on the opening date. On the first day, the center opened its doors to twenty two year-olds, adding small groups of older children on subsequent days as additional units of the building were opened. All six units were operating by June 21, with a total of nineteen teachers and 134 children. The center was open from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at a cost of $3 per child per week, with a capacity of 180 children between the ages of two and six years.[120] The center was soon operating at maximum capacity with twenty-two teachers and 180 children.[121]

The Maritime Center was reportedly designed according to Catherine Landreth's recommendations, with its six classrooms, enclosed play area, diet kitchen, sleeping room, and infirmary. Because the center's second story could apparently not by law be used by the children, teachers set up individual cots in the classrooms at naptime. These were constructed of wooden frames and stretched canvas. Each was labeled with a child's name, and the children brought their own blankets. Tables were located on the other end of the classroom, where the children worked on projects and ate their meals and snacks.[122] The furniture used at the center was built to scale, with different sizes to fit different ages. Even the two- and three-year olds were provided with differently scaled chairs and tables to fit their individual sizes. Since the centers housed extended day care up to age twelve, the Maritime Center contained larger furniture for older children as well. The goal was to establish good posture habits, reflecting current developmental research which indicated that "wherever a group includes children of more than one-year age range, duplicates of furniture of different heights are necessary for children's comfortable use of work tables and work benches."[123]

Although the various child care facilities in Richmond seem to have differed considerably in appearance and capacity, the Richmond School District apparently provided common programming for them all, under the direction of Erla Boucher. According to the program's

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[120] "Nursery School Observes Birth Date Tomorrow," *Richmond Independent*, 31 May 1944, 9; "Bulletins," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 2 July 1943, 11.
[121] "Nursery School Observes Birth Date Tomorrow." See Appendix for list of original staff at the Maritime Center.
[122] Powers.
[123] Landreth, 32. Many of these chairs and tables still exist at the Maritime Center.

administrators, the stated purpose of these nurseries was to guide the [children's] mental, social, and physical development along proper channels, keep them clean, safe, and well-fed, and teach them good health habits and social interaction skills such as sharing. "Free play" was encouraged, in order to allow each child to pursue his own interests. Creative activities such as playing with clay encouraged self-expression.[124]

These references to the encouragement of children's creativity and self-expression suggest a familiarity with progressive nursery school curriculum and contemporary philosophies of child development. National experts on child development were recommending that the latest advances in nursery education be incorporated into these wartime child care centers once established. Emma Lundberg of the U.S. Children's Bureau recommended in early 1942 that "the day-care center should include the recognized features of a good day nursery, incorporating the methods and equipment of a nursery school. During the past few years day nurseries have increasingly come within this definition by adopting nursery-education methods, and recently many nursery schools have readjusted their programs so as to provide the full-day service of a day-care center."[125]

New teachers for Richmond's childcare centers were apparently trained at the Washington School.[126] They were paid on a monthly salary, and were required to have a teacher's certificate. Erla Boucher enabled all the teachers to get Social Security. Many of the teachers had children themselves, and as one former staff member remembered, "it was a great place for mothers to work. They could bring their little children with them."[127] Teaching assistants and volunteers, often high school students, comprised a critical component of child care nationwide, and training suggestions for these individuals were published in various journals. As one writer put it, "it is foolhardy to expect the provisions for the care of children made by either the federal government or local agencies to be immediately adequate or the needed quota of appropriately trained persons to be on hand to man whatever institutions are established....This has necessitated calling for volunteers for nursery schools and day care centers to fill in the breech." Experts agreed that completion of high school need not be a requirement for child care volunteers, as long as they remained under the supervision of trained nursery teachers.[128] Volunteers, usually young girls, received training from various national organizations, including the Girl Scouts, the High School Victory Corps, and the Red Cross.[129]

The Maritime Child Development Center shared rotating staff members with the other units administered by the Richmond School District. Alice Leet, the original nutritionist for all the Richmond nurseries, was said to plan "a day's full quota of protective foods" that included daily doses of cod liver oil and fruit juice. Parents could pick up a printed menu of the week's meals in advance. Children were served a hot breakfast, morning snack, hot lunch, and afternoon

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[124] "Eight Hour Orphans," 6-7.
[125] Lundberg, 157.
[126] Powers reported that her starting salary in 1943 was $350 per month.
[127] Powers.
[128] Helen L. Koch, "Training Volunteer Teachers' Aides for Defense Nursery Schools and Day Care Centers," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 8 (July-August, 1944), 229, 232.
[129] Anderson, 132.

snack.[130] A nurse, art instructor, and librarian also made the rounds of the various centers. The librarian conducted story hours at the various centers, with books circulating from center to center. Each room had a library corner and a play corner with doll furniture.[131] A music director planned age-specific music for the children, by room. A pediatrician gave each child a check-up upon enrollment, with subsequent examinations every three months. For the Maritime Center, if not for all the units, Catherine Landreth was reported to have planned a "scientific program for outdoor child development."[132]

Children at the Maritime Center received immunizations against smallpox, diphtheria, and whooping cough and periodic checkups from a dental hygienists, and an ear, nose and throat specialist. A psychiatrist was available for children with special needs, all without extra charge. An article recognizing the center's first anniversary put the benefits of the center in war production terms, saying that "During this one-year period it was possible to release 303,620 woman-hours by taking care of these children while their mothers worked in the shipyards. These children have made it possible for their mothers to build an extra Liberty ship for it takes 250,000 man (or woman) hours of direct labor to build such a ship." It continued that "Most parents have been very co-operative with the school, recognizing the changes in their children and being much pleased by them."[133]

At the Washington School, the only twenty-four-hour center, trained teachers devoted individual attention to children's specific needs, such as problems with bed-wetting. Teachers were said to watch the children all night long, and pick the child up at the first indication of bed-wetting, in order to promote "good habits." Children were also encouraged to dress themselves, and to play games that were specifically selected to develop cooperation and team spirit.[134]

Usage of Child Care in Richmond

The Maritime Child Development Center was reported to be "by far the most popular nursery" in Richmond, with a total (not simultaneous) enrollment of 718 children in 1943-44, more than one out of every four children in Richmond's entire nursery school program. The nursery, although under the charge of the school district, was heavily subsidized by Kaiser and was recognized as unique in the local system.[135] Its popularity can be attributed to the high caliber of its facilities, as well as to the community it served. Residents of Maritime Commission housing, along with the residents of the permanent projects, were said to participate most frequently in social activities, with some acting as small insular towns. It is therefore not surprising that they would be especially supportive of their child care center, a central institution

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[130] Powers; "Eight Hour Orphans," 6-7; Although the Maritime and Pullman Centers were run, like the others, by the Richmond School District, they may have featured some programming distinctions. Because Mary Hall Prout and Ruth C. Powers worked primarily at the Maritime and Pullman Centers, it seems best to confine their detailed descriptions of programming to this section. Also, because these are the only World War II era child care facilities remaining in Richmond, it seems best not to make too many generalizations about objects found there.

[131] For many years the art instructor was Monica Haley. Some of the paintings Haley used, and her portfolio, are still located at the Maritime Center. The doll furniture remains at the Maritime Center.

[132] "12 Families in Building on South Sixteenth," 1.

[133] "Nursery School Observes Birth Date Tomorrow," 9.

[134] "Time to Retire," 4-5; Apparently the Washington School's nursery school unit soon became a 12-hour school like the others.

[135] Brown, 269.

in the community.[136] In September 1943, one report indicated that Richmond was the only East Bay community that was fully using available nursery facilities. The ratio of accredited teachers to children in Richmond was one to six.[137]

USMC Divisions No. 1 and No. 2 were somewhat unique within Richmond. Like many of the others, they were built exclusively for shipyard workers, and the federal government allowed the managers of the shipyards to determine standards for tenants in these projects. According to historian Marilynn S. Johnson, management gave priority in the USMC divisions to so-called "essential workers," including journeymen, leadermen, and foremen, levels of workers that did not include many non-whites. As a result, the housing developments of Harbor Gate and USMC Divisions No. 1 and No. 2 in Richmond were 90 percent white. Johnson continues: "These Maritime Commission projects, along with some of the all-white permanent projects, represented the upper-crust of war housing society. Selective occupancy criteria fostered class and income distributions, and the projects' design sought to emulate a middle-class suburban setting."[138] Although there are no surviving documents specifying the racial composition of enrolled children at the Maritime Center, it seems likely from this evidence that the majority were white. Evidently the child care centers in the war apartments near the shipyards, including Terrace and Canal, enrolled more non-white children, as this was where their families lived.[139]

Some reports also indicate that African-American women were less likely to utilize Richmond's child care centers. One explanation may be cultural. By some accounts, many Southern black families preferred the use of extensive family networks to provide care for their children. It does appear that the administrators of the child care centers were white, a factor that might have made black parents feel less welcome.[140] When some African-American women were interviewed about the war years, some remembered Richmond's child care centers as not being available to African-American women. This was evidently not the case, but it does demonstrate the degree to which a large segment of the population may have felt distanced from the services provided by the centers.[141] At Kaiser's northwest shipyards, the director of the Child Service Centers later stated that they believed they had failed to attract black mothers, largely because they had hired no black staff members, and had not done enough to help the African American population overcome their anxieties over leaving their children in the care of others.[142] Many other centers did discriminate racially, with virtually all nurseries in the South excluding African American children.[143]

Nationwide, childcare centers were a relatively unpopular solution to women's child care needs, regardless of racial or ethnic background. A 1944-45 study of women working in ten war production areas across the country found that 64 percent of the surveyed mothers of children

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[136] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 123.
[137] "Mothers by the Day," 2-3.
[138] Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 108.
[139] Powers.
[140] See Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 115.
[141] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African-American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 68.
[142] Hymes et al., 49.
[143] Riley, 279.

under age fourteen arranged for child care with immediate family members. Nursery centers were used by only 5 percent of the employed mothers, with others using neighbors, maids, other means, or no arranged supervision at all. Percentages varied by region, however, with 11 percent of San Francisco area women utilizing outside child care services.[144]

Low usage may have been the result of a number of factors. Child care centers were often housed in whatever buildings happened to be available, and with the wartime building shortage, this may not have resulted in nearby locations. Since the WPA nurseries were often located in poorer neighborhoods, many of the wartime nurseries were as well, in locations wartime working mothers may have found objectionable. Moreover, the centers may have been difficult to access, considering the wartime obstacles of gas rationing, overcrowded public transportation, and reliance of many on car pooling. Limited hours of operation, higher fees, and inadequate conditions at the centers themselves may have also been factors. The FWA did finally mandate a maximum fee of fifty cents per child per day, which, while still potentially high for some families, helped keep costs down for those with multiple children.[145]

On a national level, conditions of child care centers ranged from very poor to excellent, with public centers reportedly superior to commercial operations. Women were in general essentially unfamiliar with the idea of child care centers, which likely made them less willing to leave their children in the care of strangers. Word of mouth was the best publicity as many employers did not do what they could to publicize child care services, industrial or federally-sponsored, to their employees. Parents' distrust and their association of child care with poverty may have been more of a consideration. One historian wrote that "rather than seeing these centers as a vital social, health and educational service for children, the general public often viewed clients as failed families seeking public assistance." Women did, however, seem to feel more comfortable with factory-sponsored child care, according to a 1943 study.[146]

Part V: Postwar Developments

With so many women employed at the Richmond shipyards throughout World War II, the city's child care centers were kept busy. However, employment at the Richmond shipyards fell sharply at war's end, from more than 90,000 workers at its peak to less than 35,000 by August 1945. By June 1946, only 300 women remained employed in California shipyards. Some postwar ship repair contracts continued for a time, but by November 1946, shipbuilding at the yards had "virtually ceased." Richmond was bombarded with unemployment claims, and although there was an initial exodus when former shipworkers picked up and left town, many remained in Richmond, and a large influx of veterans took the places of those who had departed.[147]

Many expected the child care centers associated with the Richmond Shipyards to close, like the shipyards, at the end of the war, when women workers were no longer needed for the war effort. Some community members argued for their closure, while others felt that the reason for their existence had not past, arguing that "the need of the great majority of the children for

[144] Riley, 254, 257.
[145] Riley, 274-78; Hartmann, 85.
[146] Riley, 278-83.
[147] Johnson, 198-200.

nursery care has not been lessened by the end of the war."[148] Needs aside, many women simply did not wish to relinquish their new roles as wage earners. A survey conducted by the Labor Force Survey of the Bay Area in December 1944 revealed that of 8,613 women working at five shipyards in the region, only 2,511 wanted to go back to housework after the war.[149] In addition, many women, including single women, wives of disabled veterans, widows with families, and professional women were known to continue to want or need outside employment.[150]

The Federal Works Administration announced at the war's end that aid to community child care center programs would terminate on September 30, 1945, with month-long extensions for certain farm and city locations. After protests from parental organizations, mothers, city officials, labor organizations and more streamed into Washington at this announcement, the program was extended to February 28, 1946, in order to allow state legislatures to research funding alternatives. California residents were the most vocal of all the states in protesting the planned closures, sending in the highest number of letters, cards, wires, and petitions to the FWA in the weeks following the announcement.[151] Many teachers and parents traveled to Sacramento to lobby the legislature to keep California's child care centers open. Although the Lanham Act funding was discontinued once February arrived, several legislative enactments by the California legislature enabled the child care centers to be run by authorized California school districts. Scheduled to extend through the spring of 1949, this measure was approved in order to "meet a need which became acute during the war and is as great today as during wartime due to the increase and shift of population in California, and also to the transition from a war-time to a peace-time basis."[152]

Thanks to these legislative measures, both the Maritime and Pullman Child Development Centers continued to operate, with a few adjustments to postwar society. Among these, a "means test" was introduced at California's child care centers in July 1947, in order to determine children's eligibility for enrollment. Only those children whose family income did not exceed $224 for single-parent homes, $275 for two-parent homes, or more than $60 per family member per month would now qualify. A sliding fee scale schedule based on family income and number of dependents was also introduced at this time, in order to ensure that child care would be available first to families with the greatest financial need. The state program adopted further regulations that represented a shift from wartime policies. The income requirement was waived for veterans of World War II, public school teachers, and registered nurses.[153]

Many of the wartime centers disappeared as majority of the city's temporary war housing was demolished, most in the 1950s. Plans for redevelopment in Richmond began as early as 1949 with the formation of the Richmond Redevelopment Agency. The Canal and Terrace War Apartments, home of two of Richmond's first wartime nursery school units, were the first to go, in 1952. They could not be demolished earlier than that date because of the continued housing

[148] "Consumer's Corner," *Fore'N'Aft*, 14 September 1945, 6.
[149] "We're Here to Stay!" *Fore'N'Aft*, 15 December 1944, 1.
[150] "Women Look Ahead," *Fore'N'Aft*, 5 October 1945, 1, 3.
[151] Riley, 397-98, 406, 408.
[152] California State Department of Education, ii.
[153] California State Department of Education, 4.

shortage in Richmond.[154] With the demolition of war housing, the neighborhoods surrounding the Maritime and Pullman Child Development Centers began to become more racially integrated. African-American families began to buy homes in the area, which brought more children of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds into these child care centers.[155]

In June 1953, the Richmond Board of Education voted to close the Maritime Nursery School and its associated extended day care program, and the Harbor Gate Nursery School, upon the recommendation of Superintendent of Schools George T. Miner. Other World War II-era nursery schools still open in Richmond at this point were Peres, Eastshore, and Pullman. Miner cited hidden costs and abuses of the welfare system as the reasons for the proposed closure, as well as the school district's need for additional space. At this point, 231 children were enrolled at the Maritime Center, including 112 in the nursery school program and seventy-eight in extended day care. Board member Loren Whitlock expressed a common cultural belief when he said "the board knows that the single parent must work to support the family, and I am in full sympathy in situations of this type. But I have little sympathy in cases where two parents go off to work and leave their children as responsibilities of the child care centers." Many came out to protest the planned closing, including Lillian Smith, President of the PTA. She argued that half of the mothers with children enrolled in the nursery schools were working wives who could not afford to employ nannies for their children. Other objections to the projected closure came from city councilman John J. Sheridan and from the Contra Costa Central Labor Council.[156]

In the end, it was decided that Harbor Gate would close on August 1, 1953, as that entire housing project was scheduled for demolition, while the Maritime Center would remain open. Acting board president Joseph Perrelli issued the following statement:

> To close all the centers would work a definite hardship on many people. The board recognizes that in a community such as ours, child care centers of one sort or another, whether operated by the school department or someone else, are necessary.

Enrollment in the remaining child care centers would be limited to children who lived within the Richmond school district and qualified under the "means test." First priority was for single parents with incomes not surpassing $250 per month. Enrollment was also open, with lower priority, to the children of "GI students or on-the-job trainees, public school teachers, registered nurses, workers in essential industries, and producers or harvesters of crops."[157]

At this point, John Webber, head of the statewide child care center program for the State Department of Education, explained that two-thirds of the funding for the child care centers came from the state, with one-third from the parents. Noting that Richmond's child care center program was a pilot program, as one of the first in the state, he stated that "only the school

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[154] Johnson, "Urban Arsenals," 306; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 223, 226; See "Richmond Planning Commission Report on Housing and Development."
[155] Powers.
[156] "Reasons for Child Center Action Told," *Richmond Independent*, 10 June 1953; "Closing of 3 Nurseries is Protested," *Richmond Independent*, 9 June 1953; "Labor to Ask Care Centers to Stay Open," *Richmond Independent*, 18 June 1953.
[157] "Maritime School to Stay Open," *Richmond Independent*, 24 June 1953.

board's interest in this program keeps it going." In 1953, only fifty-two out of 1,744 school districts in California were operating child care centers. Five of these districts, Richmond included, were forced to "levy local taxes to take care of deficits in the programs." In 1952, Richmond raised $9,000 through such taxation.[158]

The Maritime Center remained open through succeeding decades, as did the Pullman Center. Providing a consistent administrative presence, Erla Boucher remained the Nursery School Director for the Richmond School District into the 1960s. Funding for the remaining Richmond Unified School District child care centers was in jeopardy in 1986 due to a budget shortfall of approximately $440,000. At this point, the four centers still administered by the Richmond School District included the Maritime and Pullman Centers, as well as the Crescent Park Center in Richmond and Lake Center in San Pablo. Together they served 561 low-income children, with 75 percent of families paying no fees. The operating annual budget for the Richmond centers was at this time $3 million, but the state's cost-of-living increases were evidently not keeping up with costs. Business manager Fred Basalto of the Richmond Unified School District stated of the centers that "we ought to tell the state that if they won't give us enough money to run them, then they ought to take it back and run [them] themselves."[159]

Within just a few short years, the school district did precisely that. Economic troubles in the Richmond school district had continued to plague its child care centers. The district had been forced to fund the centers through money from its general fund. This cost totaled $350,000 to $500,000 per year. In addition, the state had provided $350 million per year to fund child care for over 121,000 of California's children. Finally, in July 1990, Contra Costa County and the West Contra Costa YMCA took over the administration of the Richmond Unified School District child care centers. The county's Community Services Department assumed operation of the Maritime Center as well as the Pullman and Crescent Park Centers in Richmond, and the Lake Center in San Pablo. The source of funding for this move was $2.6 million from the State Department of Education. The YMCA would run other child care facilities at the Richmond Boys Club, Bayview and Peres Elementary Schools, and the Rodeo Child Development Center. With this transfer of administration, teacher salaries would go down from $22,000 to $33,000 under the school district to $13,727 to $20,405 under county administration.[160] Head Start was combined into the existing program in 1999.

Today the Maritime Child Development Center remains in full-time use, serving its original purpose as a child care facility for use by local families. The structure itself has changed remarkably little since its construction in 1943, contributing to the building's historical significance. New windows and doors, along with modern equipment, represent the only noticeable modifications. The lasting impact, if any, of the hundreds of child care centers established for working families during World War II remains debatable. Historian Susan Elizabeth Riley has written that "the child care program was not unique in its attitudes toward women's domestic roles, its treatment of women, and its underlying imperative to limit any wartime threats to male dominance in the private and public realms."[161] This may be, and yet the

[158] "Maritime School to Stay Open."
[159] "Child Care in RUSD in jeopardy," *West County Times*, 11 April 1986, 1A.
[160] "County, YMCA to Take Over School Child Care," *West County Times*, 6 June 1990, 3A.
[161] Riley, 240.

World War II child care centers did represent at least a tacit acceptance of the fact that parents could legitimately, and safely, allow their children to be cared for in part by individuals outside the family. The main differences in opinion stemmed from varying interpretations of what circumstances were required in order to define child care as a "necessity." Throughout the decades of debate and controversy, the Maritime Child Development Center has quietly survived, representing the remarkable World War II homefront experience in Richmond and the continued need for child care among members of its community. The building is currently being considered as a historically significant component of the new Rosie the Riveter/World War II Homefront National Historical Park, established in October 2000.[162]

[162] Planning and Partnership Team, Pacific Great Basin Support Office, Pacific West Region, National Park Service. *Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front Feasibility Study*, June 2000, 50.

Part VI: Appendix
Names and Town of Residence of Original Maritime Child Development Center Staff

Director	Place of Residence
Erla A. Boucher	Walnut Creek
Nutritionist	
Alice B. Leet	Berkeley
Teachers	
Elizabeth Bowden	Richmond
Donna Bushnell	Berkeley
Audra Cochrane	Richmond
Hazel Collins	Richmond
Lelia Erickson	Berkeley
Marguerite Gerhhardt	Richmond
Margaret J. George	El Cerrito
Mattie H. Katzman	Berkeley
Laura McRoberts	Berkeley
Myrtle C. Nash	Berkeley
Dorothy L. Prescott	Piedmont
Leota Trammel	Richmond
Janet H. White	Berkeley
Margaret Whitington	Richmond
Martha J. Keene	Berkeley
Supervisors	
Polly B. Corfield	Richmond
Dorothy E. Gerrity	Berkeley
Ruby A. Patton	Richmond
Matrons	
Lillian H. Brown	Richmond
Margaret L. Chattelton	Richmond
Bena R. Cramer	Richmond
Ruby Mincy	Richmond
May Tilles	Berkeley
Alvina Weedon	Richmond
Cooks	
Sadie E. Coudyser	Richmond
Emily Lepisto	Richmond
Margaret Stewart	Richmond
Hazel G. Strickland	Richmond
Anna Tenhulzen	Richmond

[Source: "60 Enrolled as First Nursery Unit is Opened," *Richmond Independent*, 2 June 1943.]

Part VII: Bibliography

A Note on Sources

The Henry J. Kaiser Papers (Manuscript Collection 83/42c), at the Bancroft Library on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, is an enormous repository of 300+ cartons of Kaiser-related material. The library's collections are accessible to the general public upon registration. The collection includes correspondence, photographs, newsletters, administrative records, scrapbooks, construction plans, and more. A series of photographs of the Maritime Child Development Center can be found in Bancroft Pictorial Collection No. 1983.19. Detailed finding aids are available online and at the Bancroft Library. The Richmond Public Library maintains a separate Richmond Collection of materials relating to Richmond, including vertical files, published and unpublished works, and a large collection of the Richmond Shipyards' official newsletter, *Fore 'N' Aft.*

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Flesher, C.W. to D.E. Lawrence. 31 August 1942. Reading File, August-September 1942, RG 178 U.S. Maritime Commission, Declassified NND 822013, Records of the Director, West Coast Regional Construction Division, 1942-45, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, CA, Box 20.

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Figure 1: Proposed Plan of Maritime Nursery, October 13, 1942
Source: Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

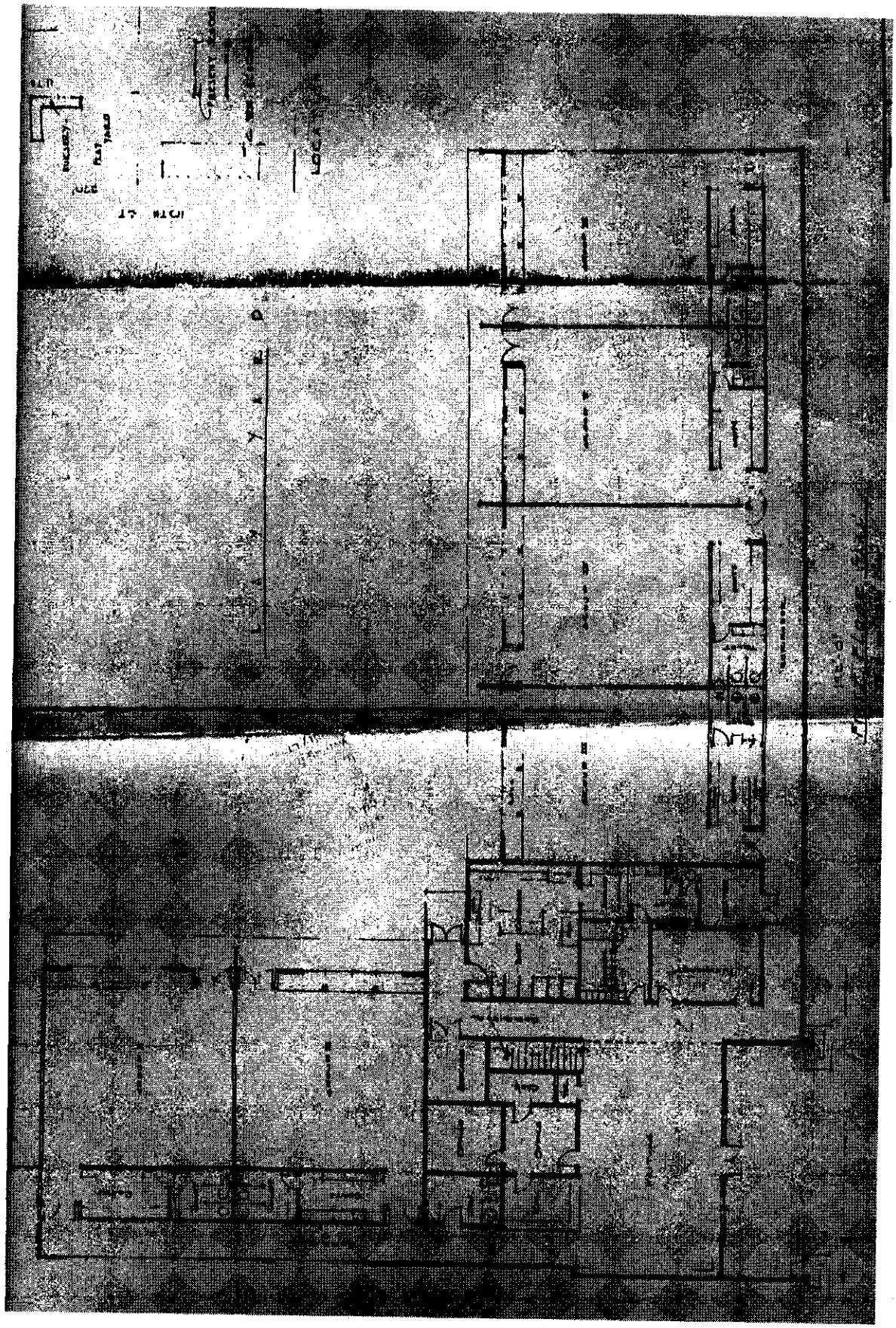
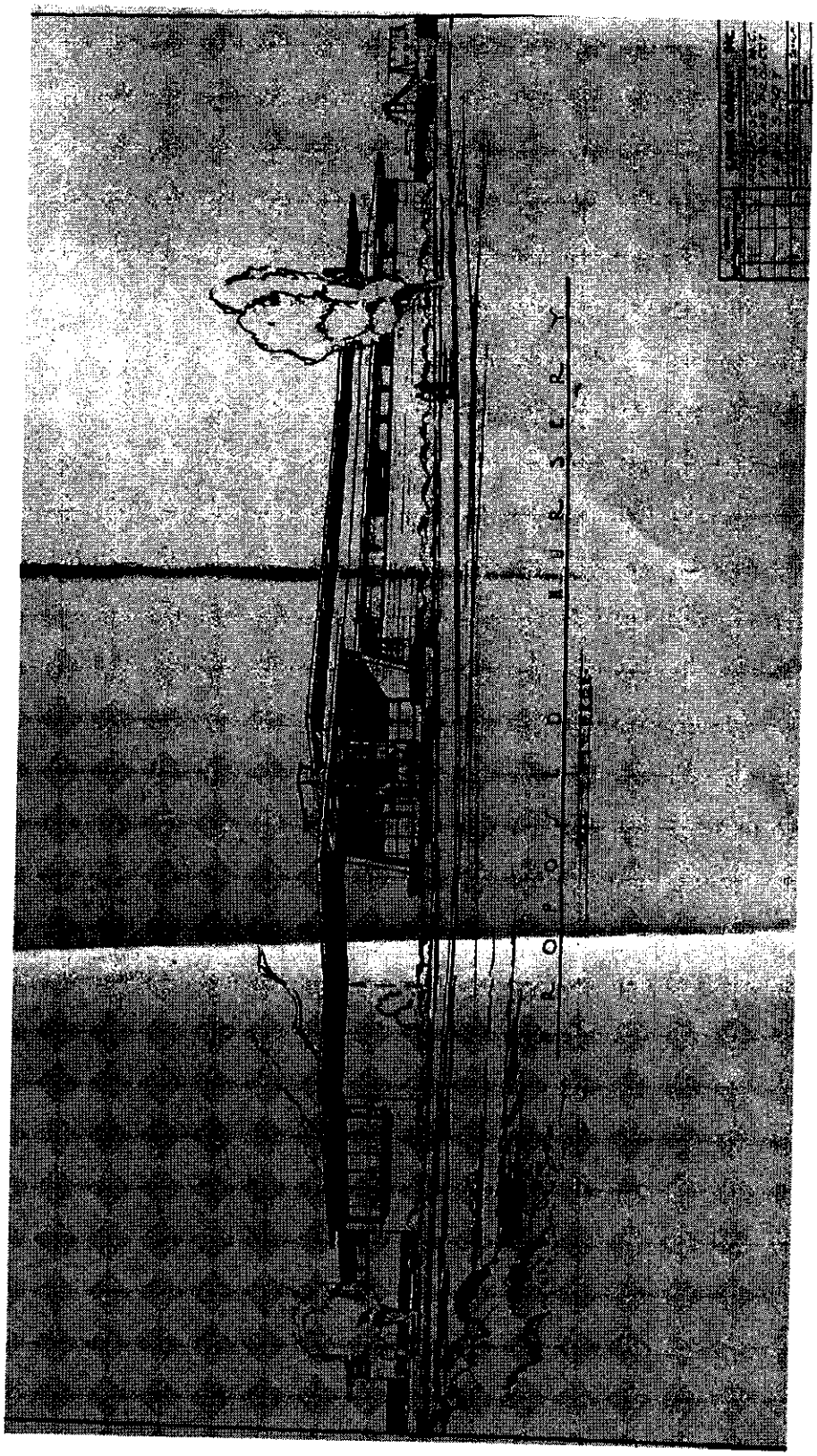


Figure 2: Elevation of Proposed Nursery for USMC Housing Division No. 1, December 9, 1942
Source: Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley



ADDENDUM TO:
MARITIME CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Historical Park
1014 Florida Avenue
Richmond
Contra Costa County
California

HABS No. CA-2718
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